

AGENDA ITEM III

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS RELATIVE TO THE REVIEW OF LOW-COMPLETER PROGRAMS - PHASE I

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A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Ever cognizant of its responsibility to the citizens of the State of Louisiana to maintain and support the most effective and efficient system of higher education, the Board of Regents has three times in the recent past conducted reviews of academic programs which have graduated low numbers of completers. Particulars of each of these three low-completer reviews are summarized below:

1986 - Included were programs at all levels which had five or fewer graduates during the previous five academic years (an average of one per year) .

532 Programs Reviewed
314 Programs Maintained
218 Programs Terminated
21 New Programs Created Through Revision and/or Consolidation

1990 - Included were programs at all levels with the following numbers of completers during the previous five academic years: undergraduate programs with 15 or fewer graduates (average 3 per year); master/specialist programs with 10 or fewer graduates (average 2 per year); and doctoral/professional programs with 5 or fewer graduates (average 1 per year).

482 Programs Reviewed
356 Programs Maintained
126 Programs Terminated
12 New Programs Created Through Revision and/or Consolidation

1994 - Included were programs at all levels with the following numbers of completers during the previous five academic years: undergraduate programs with 40 or fewer graduates (average 8 per/year); master/specialist programs with 25 or fewer graduates (average 5 per/year); and doctoral/professional programs with 10 or fewer graduates (average 2 per/year) . *

880 Programs Reviewed
499 Programs Maintained
381 Programs Terminated

* This review extended from 1994 -2001, granting up to seven additional years to select marginal degrees to develop greater student numbers. The program numbers above reflect the ultimate outcome of this process.

B. PRELIMINARY STEPS LEADING TO THE 2004 REVIEW OF LOW-COMPLETER PROGRAMS

1. Scope of Review

In Fall 2002, the Academic Affairs staff informed chief academic officers statewide that another review of low-completer programs would be forthcoming shortly and that this review process would adopt the same program productivity levels used to evaluate programs in 1994. The timing of this review, covering AYs 1998-99 through 2002-03, was formally announced at the Academic and Student Affairs Committee Meeting in October 2003. Shortly thereafter, a staff decision was made *not* to include campuses of the Louisiana Technical College (LTC) in the 2004 Review of Low-Completer Programs. The rationale behind this action was twofold: first, the LTC did not become part of the State's higher education system until 2000; and second, reliable completer data needed to measure program productivity at the LTC has only available since 2001. Hence, there was not sufficient data over a long enough period of time with which reasonable judgements could be made. **Yet, while the LTC has been excused from assessment at this time, immediately upon conclusion of this review, the staff shall perform a preliminary analysis of LTC programs using the same productivity levels described above in an effort to forewarn the institution of pending low-completer program problems. Additional details concerning this effort will be forthcoming later.**

2. Identification of Low-Completer Programs

In February 2004, after the receipt and input of AY 2002-2003 student data, the Academic Affairs staff requested from the Information Systems and Data Processing Section an analysis of student completer numbers from AYs 1998-99 through 2002-03. The specific parameters for identification of low-completer programs were as follows:

A program/option shall be subject to identification and examination as a Low-Completer Program if the program/option has, during AY 1998-99 through 2002-03, fewer than the following numbers of degrees conferred:

<u>Degree Level</u>	<u>Productivity Level</u>
Certificate/Diploma/Associate/Baccalaureate	40 (avg. 8 per year)
Post-Baccalaureate/Master/ Post-Master/Specialist	25 (avg. 5 per year)
Professional/Doctoral/Post-Doctoral	10 (avg. 2 per year)

C. 2004 LOW-COMPLETER PROGRAMS

As a result of the process explained above, the staff has identified 627 programs at 25 of Louisiana's public universities and colleges which have graduated low numbers of completers during AYs 1998-99 through 2002-2003. (*See Chart I - Numbers of Low-Completer Programs at State Universities and Colleges - AYs 1998-99 Through 2002-03 and Chart I A - Low-Completer Programs at State Universities and Colleges AYs 1998-99 Through 2002-03.*)

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

*The staff recommends that the Academic and Student Affairs Committee grant approval for the list of 2004 Low-Completer Programs - AYs 1998-99 Through 2002-03.
(See Charts I and I A.)*

D. STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MAINTENANCE OF SELECT 2004 LOW-COMPLETER PROGRAMS, BASED ON PREVIOUSLY ACCEPTED RATIONALES

The staff recognizes that many of the 627 programs can be justified on the basis of several broad rationales previously accepted Board of Regents during past low-completer reviews. Rather than require institutions to respond to all 627 low-completer programs with already acceptable rationales, the staff has developed recommendations for maintenance of select low-completer programs which are consistent with previous Regents' decisions. These recommendations are presented below.

1. Programs Which Were Approved After June 30, 1998

During past low-completer reviews, the Board of Regents has consistently determined that programs approved *after the beginning of the time period encompassed by the review* could not be accurately assessed for degree productivity. Bearing this in mind, the staff notes that of the 627 Low-Completer Programs identified above, 287 were approved or substantially changed after June 30, 1998. Hence, the staff recommends that these 287 emerging programs be maintained. However, it would also be prudent to direct affected institutions to carefully monitor these nascent programs for appropriate levels of student participation and productivity in coming years. (*See Chart II - Numbers of Low-Completer Programs at State Universities and Colleges - AYs 1998-99 Through 2002-03 Upon Elimination of Programs Which Were Approved After June 30, 1998; Chart II A - Low-Completer Programs at State Universities and Colleges - AYs 1998-99 Through 2002-03 Upon Elimination of Programs Which Were Approved After June 30, 1998; and Chart II B - Low-Completer Programs Maintained As Programs Approved After June 30, 1998.*)

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

***The staff recommends that the Academic and Student Affairs Committee maintain and strengthen the 287 Low-Completer Programs that were approved or substantially changed after June 30, 1998. Affected universities and colleges shall carefully monitor these programs as they continued to develop to assure that each are sustained by appropriate numbers of enrollees and produce adequate numbers of completers.
(See Charts II, II A, and II B.)***

Upon approval of the staff recommendation above, 340 Low-Completer Programs remain for further examination and review.

2. Core Undergraduate Programs

In past low-completer reviews, the Board of Regents has also maintained low-completer programs which have been determined to be essential, core undergraduate programs. Previously identified core academic areas include:

- General/Liberal Studies

- Sciences

 - Biology

 - Chemistry

 - Physics

- Social/Behavioral Sciences

 - Political Science/Government

 - Economics

 - Geography

 - Sociology

 - Psychology

- Humanities

 - History

 - English

 - Foreign Languages

 - Music

 - Speech/Communications

 - Theater

 - Fine Arts

- Mathematics

- Computer Science/Information Science

- Teacher Education

 - Elementary Education

 - Secondary Education (Academic Areas Above Plus HPE)

 - Special Education

Using this criterion, the staff has identified 135 of the remaining 340 Low-Completer Programs as meeting this criterion.** Accordingly, the staff recommends that these 136 core undergraduate programs be maintained. (*See Chart III - Numbers of Low-Completer Programs at State Universities and Colleges - AYs 1998-99 Through 2002-03 Upon Elimination of Core Undergraduate Programs; Chart III A - Low-Completer Programs at State Universities and Colleges - AYs 1998-99 Through 2002-03 Upon Elimination of Core Undergraduate Programs; and Chart III B - Low-Completer Programs Maintained As Core Undergraduate Programs.*)

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

***The staff recommends that the Academic and Student Affairs Committee maintain and strengthen the 135 Low-Completer Programs that have been determined to be essential core undergraduate programs.
(See Charts III, III A, and III B.)***

Upon approval of the staff recommendation above, 205 Low-Completer Programs remain for further examination and review.

3. Programs Provided by the Desegregation Settlement Agreement

Previous low-completer reviews have also maintained programs which are actively involved in the State's ongoing higher education desegregation case. The staff notes that 5 of the remaining 201 Low-Completer Programs have been provided for select predominantly black institutions by mandates of the Desegregation Settlement Agreement. Accordingly, the staff recommends that these 5 Desegregation Settlement Agreement programs be maintained. (*See Chart IV - Numbers of Low-Completer Programs at State Universities and Colleges - AYs 1998-99 Through 2002-03 Upon Elimination of Desegregation Settlement Agreement Programs; Chart IV A - Low-Completer Programs at State Universities and Colleges - AYs 1998-99 Through 2002-03 Upon Elimination of Desegregation Settlement Agreement Programs; and Chart IV B - Low-Completer Programs Maintained As Desegregation Settlement Agreement Programs.*)

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

***The staff recommends that the Academic and Student Affairs Committee maintain and strengthen the 5 Low-Completer Programs that have been determined to be part of the Desegregation Settlement Agreement.
(See Charts IV, IV A, and IV B.)***

Upon approval of the staff recommendation above, 200 Low-Completer Programs remain for further examination and review.

** For two-year institutions, this includes only appropriate associate-level programs; for four-year institutions, this includes only appropriate baccalaureate programs.

4. Teacher Education Programs Currently Under Review by the Board of Regents and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

The Board of Regents has also routinely maintained low-completer programs involved in ongoing qualitative assessment. Currently, master-level programs in all areas of teacher education are being examined by a joint review committee of the Board of Regents and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education as part of the ongoing teacher education reform initiative. The staff observes that 16 of the remaining 200 Low-Completer Programs are included in this process. In addition, there are 3 other master-level programs which are currently being reviewed by the Board of Regents for substantive change to a new program. Accordingly, the staff recommends that these 19 programs should be maintained, pending completion of all reviews. (*See Chart V - Numbers of Low-Completer Programs at State Universities and Colleges - AYs 1998-99 Through 2002-03 Upon Elimination of Master-Level Programs Already Under Review; Chart V A - Low-Completer Programs at State Universities and Colleges - AYs 1998-99 Through 2002-03 Upon Elimination of Master-Level Already Under Review; and Chart V B - Low-Completer Programs Maintained As Master-Level Programs Already Under Review.*)

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The staff recommends that the Academic and Student Affairs Committee maintain and strengthen the 19 Low-Completer Programs that have been determined to be master-level programs already under review by the Board of Regents, pending the results of these reviews. (See Charts V, V A, and V B.)

Upon approval of the staff recommendation above, 181 Low-Completer Programs remain for further examination and review.

5. Programs Which Meet Requirements of Productivity Through Aggregation With Other Closely Related Programs

The Board of Regents has also maintained select low-completer programs which meet productivity requirements when their relationships with other closely related programs are considered. Specifically, a program has been determined to be productive when it has met **one or more of the following rationales**: (a) constitutes one of several option within the same program, wherein accumulated graduates for all options equal or surpass the required number; (b) is a graduate-level program with both thesis- and non-thesis options which together produce more than the minimum number of graduates; and (c) is a graduate-level program at the master- or specialist-level which serves as the **direct and sole** feeder into a productive doctoral program. The staff has identified 31 programs which fit into this category. Accordingly, the staff recommends that these 31 programs should be maintained. (*See Chart VI - Numbers of Low-Completer Programs at State Universities and Colleges - AYs 1998-99 Through 2002-03 Upon Elimination of Programs Which Meet Requirements of Productivity*)

Through Aggregation With Other Closely Related Programs; Chart VI A - Low-Completer Programs at State Universities and Colleges - AYs 1998-99 Through 2002-03 Upon Elimination of Programs Which Meet Requirements of Productivity Through Aggregation With Other Closely Related Programs; and Chart VI B - Low-Completer Programs Maintained Programs Which Meet Requirements of Productivity Through Aggregation With Other Closely Related Programs.)

The Regents will note that Chart VI B includes a new column of information. This column is titled "Previous Low-Completer Program." As indicated before, the Board of Regents has conducted low-completer reviews three other times in the recent past— 1986, 1990, and 1994. By the dates given in this column, it becomes clear which low-completer programs currently under review were also identified as low-completer programs during past reviews. **The staff believes that a long-time history of low levels of graduates should be a critical determinant as to whether there can be reasonable expectations that a program will ever be productive.**

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

***The staff recommends that the Academic and Student Affairs Committee maintain and strengthen the 31 Low-Completer Programs that have been determined to be productive through aggregation with other closely related programs.
(See Charts VI, VI A, and VI B.)***

Upon approval of the staff recommendation above, 150 Low-Completer Programs remain for further examination and review.

E. Review Process for Remaining 2004 Low-Completer Programs

Board of Regents approval of the committee's recommendations regarding the above staff recommendations will conclude Phase I of the 2004 Review of Low-Completer Programs.

There remain 150 low-completer programs which now need to be examined closely by the Board of Regents to determine whether maintenance of these programs can be justified despite their low numbers of graduates. The initial step in this second phase of the process (Phase II) should be the required submission of rationales from affected institutions for either continued program maintenance, reconfiguration, consolidation, or termination. Specifically, the staff recommends the following:

1. Low-completer program rationales shall be due in the Office of the Associate Commissioner for Academic and Student Affairs by April 23, 2004.
2. Rationales should not exceed one page in length for each program under review.
3. Any corrections in numbers of graduates previously reported by the affected institution must be supported with substantive and conclusive documentation.

4. Rationales for program maintenance shall address the following issues:
 - a. Consistency with institutional role, scope, and mission.
 - b. State need for graduates.
 - c. Institutional need to support other more productive programs.
 - d. Measures of program productivity other than numbers of graduates.
 - e. Additional institutional support needed to make the program productive within a reasonable time frame.
5. Rationales for program reconfiguration/consolidation shall address the following issues:
 - a. Reasons why a reconfigured/consolidated program would succeed as compared to the current non-productive program arrangement.
 - b. All issues identified in #4 above.
6. All rationales for program maintenance/reconfiguration/consolidation shall provide a supportable five-year projection for numbers of enrollees and graduates beginning AY 2004-05 through 2009-10, with the understanding that the Board of Regents shall hold the affected institution fully accountable for achieving these goals.
7. There are no staff recommendations for submission or content of institutional requests for termination.

Once these rationales have been received and studied, the staff may request additional information and/or clarification from affected institutions. Staff recommendations relative to Phase II of this process will be forthcoming to the Regents soon thereafter.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The staff recommends that the Academic and Student Affairs Committee grant approval for the submission and content of institutional requests for maintenance, reconfiguration, consolidation, or termination of the remaining 150 low-completer programs as outlined in Section E of the staff summary above.

